An ETFO Handbook

the collaborative coaching conversation

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It is the goal of the Elementary Teachers' Federation of Ontario to work with others to create schools, communities, and a society free from all forms of individual and systemic discrimination. To further this goal, ETFO defines equity as fairness achieved through proactive measures which result in equality, promote diversity, and foster respect and dignity for all.

The Collaborative Coaching Handbook, is a resource for getting started with your own Collaborative Coaching conversations. It is the result of a ministry funded project completed in collaboration with the ETFO Collaborative Coaching Community under the guidance of Dr. Anne Rodrigue. For a year and a half, in two face-to-face sessions this online community of practice, consisting of 15 ETFO members, worked in self-selected partnerships to complete professional development projects and as a result, completed this incredible ETFO Collaborative Coaching Handbook.

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Table of Contents

Forward i

Six Basic Coaching Skills 1

1. Creating The Space 3
2. Questions 5
3. Acknowledgement 7
4. Championing 9
5. Metaphor 10
6. Homework Inquiry 12

Participant Projects 15

Technology Promotes Differentiated Product 17
By Carrie Nethery and Julie Phillips

Connecting Curriculum to Culture 25
By Hollie Mahusky and Jasmine Nix

Supporting Intermediate
Teachers in Implementing Guided Reading 31
By Janice Staats and Laura DeGrow

The SEA of Teachers
(Teachers and Assistive Technology) 36
By Leslie Hunter-Dover and Kim Ryckman

Blending English Literacy
Initiatives into the French Language Program 39
By Kelly Barbarich and Anita Simpson

Forward

I didn't believe that a simple conversation could promote or renew enthusiasm and confidence to such a great extent.

Participant, ETFO Collaborative Coaching 2010

The coaching conversations have helped us to create something do-able. The conversations have allowed us to communicate what it is we think we need, what we want, and what we need to do.

Participant, ETFO Collaborative Coaching 2010

As educators, our professional conversations are often about making desired change happen. Collaborative Coaching (CC) can enrich these professional conversations – even among colleagues who work easily with each other.

This handbook is a resource for getting started with your own Collaborative Coaching conversations. The content is gleaned from the real time experiences of the teachers and facilitators who participated in ETFO's 2010 Collaborative Coaching program. This pilot program established a coaching community that was collaborative, collegial, and non-evaluative. Participants worked in self-selected partnerships to complete their own professional development projects. In addition, they learned six basic coaching skills. These six skills became the scaffolding of Collaborative Coaching conversations about their projects. Each partnership expressed delight and surprise about what became possible through their Collaborative Coaching conversations.

The handbook introduces the six basic skills of a Collaborative Coaching conversation. At first glance, these coaching skills seem familiar. We encourage you to look deeper. What could the skills of Collaborative Coaching bring to your conversations?

In practical terms, a Collaborative Coaching conversation requires a quiet place that will be free from interruption for as little as twenty minutes. There is no *"client"* in the Collaborative Coaching relationship. Partners take turns being coach and coachee.

During coaching conversations, the coach supports the coachee's self-discovery. The coach listens with full attention, asks a few questions and offers statements of support. The coachee is responsible for her own agenda of change. Next steps in planning and goal setting are the coachee's to identify. This balanced exchange of coaching roles is based on trust and mutual respect. It invites a creative shift within the individuals and between the colleagues who have Collaborative Coaching conversations.

The six basic skills of Collaborative Coaching are always a works in progress – even for people who consider themselves 'good' coaches. The handbook gives you and your colleagues a framework for stepping into Collaborative Coaching. It's an invitation to begin making desired change happen.

We learned to truly listen and acknowledge one another while working on a similar goal.

Participant, ETFO Collaborative Coaching 2010

Six Basic Coaching Skills

1. Creating The Space

As educators we have to be experts at multi-tasking. Incidents and schedules constantly demand our attention. During the working day, we are masters at stopping and then picking up the thread of our professional conversations.

Create the Space

When we create space for a Collaborative Coaching conversation, we put the multi-tasking on hold. We ask ourselves to be fully present in the conversation. Whether the coaching conversation is six minutes or thirty-six minutes, we commit to a place and time that is free of distractions. Starting with small chunks of committed time helps to build a sense of initial success, and also a sense of what could be possible.

The Inner Work

Being fully present in a Collaborative Coaching conversation is not just a question of finding time and place. It's also the inner work of listening deeply that comes through trust and acceptance of each other – and ourselves. The inner work of listening deeply can be as challenging as finding the time and space to have the conversation in the first place. Can each of us be as trusting and accepting with our own selves as we are with our colleagues?

Three Steps

Consider these three steps as you begin to create space for your Collaborative Coaching conversations.

Techniques cannot replace human heart and creativity in coaching.

James Flaherty

First Step – Create Space

What happens when you dedicate uninterrupted time to your conversation?

Choose a place and a time where you and your colleague can talk quietly and comfortably for fifteen minutes without interruption.

- Turn off your cell phones.
- Take the time to sit comfortably, let yourself relax.
- As you breathe deeply, shed your immediate concerns and tensions.

Next Step – Deepen Listening

What is it like to experience listening without judgement or analysis?
Complete this 12 minute exercise and then ask the question.

- Take turns being coach and coachee.
- Start with six minutes in each role.
- As coach, ask your colleague one question about her day.
- Relax into the pauses of her conversation. Silence is okay. In fact, your silence might encourage the coachee to continue talking.
- Limit the scope of further questions to short prompts. For example, *"What else?" "Tell me more."*
- Do not ask analytical or investigative questions, avoid *"Why?"* and *"How?"* questions.
- Ask yourself: *"Am I truly listening, or am I waiting for my turn to talk?"*
- Avoid the urge to contribute your own story, or to commiserate.
- Bring your full attention to what your colleague is saying.
- Change roles after about six minutes.
- When the role exchange is complete, talk about the experience. What did you notice?

Steps Along the Way – Remove Obstacles

What does it take to be fully present in a coaching conversation?

Clearing

- Mental clutter is the collection of pressing thoughts or a single concern that interferes with our ability to focus on what is happening in the present. Clearing mental clutter before the coaching conversation begins simply makes it easier to focus in the present.
- State your need to clear and then name the obstacle.
  - *"I need to clear this before we start ..."*
- You can also help your partner to clear:
  - *"It seems like you've got something else on your mind right now."*
    "Let's take a few minutes ..."
    "What's going on ... tell me more."
- When you take time to clear before you begin, you make it easier to create the space and to listen deeply within the coaching conversation.

Allow Silences

- Sometimes when there is silence in the conversation, we feel the need to fill the space with words. In contrast, during a Collaborative Coaching conversation, we can learn to accept silences.
- Take the time ... to process ... to think ... or not to think ... to breathe.
- Allow time to ask and time to respond.

Being Unsure Can be a Strength

- Being unsure can be a strength in the coaching relationship. It's okay to describe, *"I'm not sure what I want to say here ..."* Stating, *"I don't know"*, offers honesty and vulnerability.

2. Questions

As educators we may frame powerful questions in terms of critical thinking or Bloom's Taxonomy. In Collaborative Coaching, the questions are powerful in a different way.

What's in a Coaching Question?

The emphasis is not on phrasing the perfect higher-order question. Instead, the coaching questions emerge in response to what your colleague has just said – in the present tense. Coaching questions are short and simple.

They are both open-ended and open to what is possible. Powerful coaching questions do not seek to analyze or investigate. There is no judgement in the question. Rather, powerful coaching questions can help your colleague to reach deeper for personal insight.

When you ask a powerful coaching question, be fully present with your colleague. Wait quietly for the response, and listen for more.

A list of questions is a only a reference. Having a list of questions at your fingertips is a useful reference. Even so, the best questions come from inside you. Let there be space between asking the question and receiving a response. Breathe and wait for your colleague to think and respond.

Sometimes, a question won't come to mind. That's fine, it's not a weakness or a failure. Wait and see what comes up. Maybe your colleague can bring a new idea into the space. Perhaps you will ask her, *"What's the question that you would like me to ask you?"*

What will happen when you ask a powerful coaching question?

The Choice Map

Check out The Choice Map, included here, to learn more about how to include questions asked in learning rather than questions asked in judgement.

Following are some questions adapted from Co-Active Coaching (2nd ed.) © 2007 by Laura Whitworth, Karen Kimsey-House, Henry Kimsey-House, and Phillip Sandahl. Notice how simple these questions are.

No question is longer than seven words. All questions invite opening of expression and reflection.

The Choice Map Questions

Anticipation	• What is possible? • What is exciting to you about this? • What does your intuition tell you?
Assessment	• How does it look to you? • How does it feel? • What resonates?
Clarification	• What's the part that's not clear? • Tell me more. • What else?
Evaluation	• What's the opportunity/challenge here? • What do you think that means?
Example	• Like what? • Such as?
Perspective	• How do you want it to be? • What would put the fun in this?
Implementation	• What's the action plan? • What will you do? • When will you do it?
Options	• What will happen if you do this/don't do this? • What options can you create?
Outcomes	• If you got it, what would you have? • What would it look like?
Resources	• What do you know about this now? • What resources are available to you?

Examples adapted from Co-Active Coaching (2nd ed.) © 2007 by Laura Whitworth, Karen Kimsey-House, Henry Kimsey-House, and Phillip Sandahl

3. Acknowledgement

When was the last time somebody took 30 seconds to look into your eyes and acknowledge a strength or a quality that is truly part of who you are? Well, here is an opportunity for you and your Collaborative Coaching partner to experience acknowledgement in your coaching conversations.

Affirming Strengths

A statement of acknowledgement is a powerful way to affirm the strengths of your Collaborative Coaching partner. You demonstrate that you noticed what she did, and you also affirm the positive contribution of that action or awareness. You are saying, *"Here is what you have shown me is true about you so that you could accomplish this action ... or achieve this awareness."*

Acknowledgement is not Praise

As you create a statement of acknowledgement in coaching, you are really answering the question: *"What values and strengths are being reflected right now?"* Acknowledgement is different than praise or compliments. All three affirmations are valuable, it's just that acknowledgement reflects a deeper knowing, something that takes more thought to articulate.

Here are some examples of the differences between praise, compliments, and acknowledgement:

First Step – Know the Difference Between Acknowledgement, Compliment, and Praise
Praise • *"That was outstanding work on that team project. Well done!"*
Compliment • *"I really liked the use of graphics on that report. I wish I had the technical knowledge to create that kind of product."*
Acknowledgement • *"You took a stand when you were challenged on the project rationale and you kept your cool. Your clarity on the issue really helped us to get the funding approved."*

Use the "Acknowledge" Word

Be daring and use the word *"acknowledge"* in your statement. Statements of acknowledgement can be long or short – either way, they speak the truth.

"I'd like to take a moment to acknowledge what you have accomplished. You've really worked hard to engage your technical expertise with your heartfelt interest in cultural studies. You have poured your skills and your passion into the development of this presentation and the audience knows it."

"I'd like to acknowledge your persistence in this. Your belief in what is possible has made this happen."

Accept it!

Can you and your Collaborative Coaching partner actually receive a statement of acknowledgement without embarrassment or dismissal? Don't let your Collaborative Coaching partner shrug away from the acknowledgement with a phrase like, *"It wasn't much."*

Ask her, *"What does it mean for you to hear that acknowledgement?"* If she deflects the question, gently repeat it.

Be prepared to accept acknowledgements when they are directed to you. If you feel short of words, accept the statement with a simple, *"Thank you"*. What does it do for you when somebody takes the time to acknowledge your strengths?

Keep in mind that you can ask your Collaborative Coaching partner this powerful coaching question: "What would you like to acknowledge yourself for here?"

Hmm ... self-acknowledgement, now there's a talent worth developing.

First Step – Know the Difference Between Acknowledgement, Compliment, and Praise
Acknowledgement Answers the Question • *"What strengths are being recognized right now?"*
Next Step • Use the word *"acknowledge"* in the sentence.
Steps Along the Way • Learn to accept the acknowledgement when it is given to you.

4. Championing

Championing is a skill you can bring to your coaching when your Collaborative Coaching partner may be at a low point, stressed, and tired.

When making a championing statement to your Collaborative Coaching partner, you stand up for her when she doubts her own abilities. You champion what you know is true about your Collaborative Coaching partner. You point out her abilities, her strengths and her resourcefulness. By letting her know she is quite capable of doing the things she needs to do – with specific examples – you are being her champion.

Championing is not cheerleading – even though cheerleading can be powerful too. Instead of, *"Go for it!"* championing is a quieter, more thoughtful statement. Rather than a call to action, championing is more like a call to self-affirmation.

As a champion in the coaching conversation, you are gifting your colleague with a holographic image of her best self: *"Remember when you piloted that program that nobody thought would work …"*

The truth of your championing statement gives your colleague something that she may have lost track of – an understanding of her ability and resourcefulness in the present moment.

The ultimate goal of championing is to help your colleague to become her own champion. You can ask her to reflect, *"What are you proud about here?"*, *"What does this change mean for you?"*

Lastly, keep in mind that when you champion your colleague, it's all about the stories of her own experiences. Your stories can wait.

First Step – Respond to Discouragement

- You notice your colleague is feeling discouraged.
- Consider telling her what you notice.
- Allow her time to respond about this feeling if she so chooses.

Next Step – Champion the Truth

- Champion what you know is true about your colleague. Describe her abilities, strengths, or her resourcefulness. Use specific examples, *"Remember the time when …"*

Steps Along the Way – Invite your Colleague to Become her Own Champion

- Ask your colleague to become her own champion by recalling a time when she overcame a similar obstacle. What were the strengths that served her well at that time? How could those strengths serve her now?

5. Metaphor

We often use metaphors in our conversations. These imaginative words or phrases describe the way we feel about an object, an action, or a feeling. For example, *"I feel like I just won the lottery!"* or, *"My heart sank like a stone."*

As listeners, we sometimes assume that we understand what is meant by the metaphor, and the conversations roll on. But, what if we asked for information about the choice of metaphor, for example; *"So, tell me about that feeling."*

The answer might surprise you both. A metaphor can indeed be an invitation to explore new situations with fresh perceptions. Avoid the urge to interpret your colleague's metaphor for her, or to add your own value statement.

It's fine if your colleague is unsure about the choice or the meaning of the metaphor. If you want to try working with metaphors in your coaching conversations, here are some steps that could be useful. Listen for metaphors in your conversations, it's surprising how often they come up.

Metaphors themselves aren't solutions to problems; rather, they are invitations to explore new situations with fresh perceptions.

C.J. Palus & D.M. Horth

First Step – Hold the Image of the Metaphor

- Your colleague says, "*I feel swamped by this workload*."
- Invite her to step into the image of the metaphor.
- Ask her to tell you about what the metaphor looks like or feels like.
- "*What does being "swamped" feel like?*"

Next Step – Get inside the Metaphor

- Ask her to describe himself within the metaphor, "*What's happening for you in this metaphor?*"
- Encourage her to use the first person "*I*" when describing herself.
- Ask her, "*So what's this about?*"

Steps Along the Way – Invite Change

- When your colleague uses a metaphor that is negative, ask, "*What is the flip side of this?*"
- "*What might the opposite view look like?*"
- Suppose she says, "*The workload would be easy, like a piece of cake*." Or, "*The workload would feel like clear sailing*."
- Help your colleague to explore the new image.
- Ask your colleague questions about the new metaphor. "*What does it look like/feel like for you?*"
- Then ask your colleague about how the new metaphor might be applied to her current situation.
- Does she see any new possibilities that could improve the current situation?

Adapted from "A Structured Process for Exploring and Transforming a Client's Metaphor," Moving Toward Artful Coaching, Adler International Learning, 2007, page 94.

A Metaphor is a
Window into Thinking.

6. Homework Inquiry

A homework inquiry is like a slow cooker. It needs time, on its own, to work. When you give a homework inquiry to your Collaborative Coaching partner, you give her some time to develop awareness about a challenge or an issue. When she brings this awareness forward into her next coaching conversation with you, the results might surprise you both.

Inquiry as Reflection

In your role as coach, you could create a homework inquiry that relates to an issue in the current coaching conversation. For example, suppose your Collaborative Coaching partner is feeling conflicted about competing commitments. As her coach, you might offer this homework inquiry:

"What would be different for you if you had more time to yourself?"

On the other hand, a homework inquiry may seem to be unrelated to the specifics of the coaching conversation. For example:

"Where do I give my power away?"

"What am I grateful for?"

"What is easy for me?"

There is always an opportunity to invite your colleague to affirm her strengths.

"What would you like to acknowledge about yourself?"

"What strengths brought you to this place?"

When you pose a homework inquiry and your partner wants to answer it right away, ask her to hold onto the inquiry until the next time you get together. A homework inquiry is about giving yourself time for mindful reflection.

If a question comes up for you during the Collaborative Coaching conversation that is a point of curiosity, this question could become your homework inquiry. *"This really puzzles me, and I don't know why"*, becomes, *"I'll think on it until we meet again and see what happens."*

You can also provoke your colleague to create her own homework inquiry: *"What's coming up for you that you would like some time to think about?"*

Regardless of whether the homework inquiry is connected to a particular situation or it comes 'out of the blue', it can be a powerful source of reflection between coaching sessions. When a homework inquiry creates awareness for your Collaborative Coaching partner, her perceptions about choices and action are enriched.

First Step – Be Open to Possibility

- A homework inquiry is like a slow cooker. There is no need for a speedy response. In fact, the first response might not be the final response to the inquiry.

Next Step – Take Time to Reflect

- Be mindful of the inquiry and take time reflect on the inquiry at different points of the day.

Steps Along the Way – What Was the Insight?

- Pick up the homework inquiry for discussion the next time that you get together for a Collaborative Coaching conversation.
- What was the insight? What else comes up?

Perium, C. Epsedef actereis prid popublicum tus, nos bonsilicit.
Egiliis. Simiusque quem inat occiendit gratua verti se re ta, quamquer in videm ips.

Participant Projects

Technology Promotes Differentiated Product

By Carrie Nethery and Julie Phillips

Purpose of Project

At Jean Little School, staff and students are fortunate to have access to a variety of technologies, including Interactive Whiteboards. Initially, our goal was to investigate and improve our confidence with these resources in all stages of the teaching cycle by taking complete advantage of available software, teacher-created materials, and board recommended websites. In an attempt to narrow our focus, we began to question what we truly wanted to achieve as a result of our project efforts.

We agreed that honing our 'drag and drop skills on a touch-screen' wasn't meeting our deeper values as educators. We discussed our commitment to creating learning activities that demand higher order thinking and metacognition from our students. We decided to focus our efforts on retrieving technology-based lessons (particularly for a poetry unit) to promote the Bloom's levels of analysis, synthesis, and evaluation.

Project Description

The starting point was daunting. We met with our program consultant for veteran guidance in the acquisition and delivery of technology-based lessons. Our program consultant suggested that finding quality Interactive Whiteboard (IWB) resources for a poetry unit would be difficult. In his experience, the IWB was used most often in one of three ways: an enhanced blackboard, a station/centre activity, a projector screen. Other than spending time on a website called Learn360, where we were intrigued by a Poetry Slam video, and our enthusiasm in searching for meaningful technology-aided lesson activities waned significantly. We suspected that our positions in the 'gradual release of responsibility model' were about to shift from teacher-initiated to student-directed.

In Collaborative Coaching E-tivity five, the two homework questions we chose to examine were, *"What pedagogical values require your constant attention?"* and *"Why bother with every new action?"* The answers to these questions helped reignite earlier motivation and curiosity.

- Values that require constant attention are the development and use of carefully crafted assessment pieces and the focused commitment to teaching during every minute of the work day.
- Why bother is not about giving up before you try because you *know* what the result is going to be. Why bother is being reminded of the times when the result of an action was far from what you *anticipated* it would be.

We hit the books!

We were interested in what research had uncovered about technology's influence in the classroom. As a result, we became less focused on using technology as an instructional tool and more interested in the use of technology to differentiate a culminating task that would include and challenge more students. In the revised taxonomy hierarchy, creating is at the top, followed by evaluation, analysis, application, understanding, and remembering (Pohl, Michael n.d.).

Using the Learn360 Poetry Slam video as inspiration, we developed a culminating Poetry Slam Presentation to allow our students to showcase their creations, other student works, or even published material. As a side note, we also extended the opportunity to create and communicate with technology to Mathematics by encouraging students to develop their own Smart Notebook lessons during an Algebra unit. For many students, oral presentations are so traumatic that some will miss school to avoid them or beg teachers to let them present one-on-one. Unfortunately, this often results in a lack of depth (analysis, synthesis, evaluation) as students panic at the thought of spending any time explaining their work to an audience.

We determined a solution that allowed for differentiated product to ensure every student was at ease. While traditional methods of presenting a poetic interpretation, such as costumed readings and musical accompaniment, were featured at our Poetry Slam day, students had options. Students who wanted to display, for example, a slide show that used fonts, line breaks, images, transitions, and music to depict thematic or symbolic features of their works could do so. They were allowed to simply watch their creation along with the class. Every student was given choice. The subsequent variety of works and the unique talents the students demonstrated was outstanding.

Curriculum Connections

The recently revised Ontario Curriculum Document for Grade 8 Language Arts provided assessment guidelines for this project. Curriculum expectations are Level 3 attainments, but in encouraging our students to exceed expectations, we have included italicized Level 4 attainments.

- Evaluate the effectiveness of presentation strategies and suggest (*create*) other strategies
- Use (*develop*) appropriate visual aids to support and enhance oral presentations
- Explain (*analyze*) elements combined to create/reinforce/enhance meaning
- Identify (*manipulate*) conventions used in media forms to convey meaning/influence the audience
- Produce media texts of some (*sophisticated*) technical complexity for specific purposes and audiences
- Identify (*defend*) strategies in making sense of media texts
- Explain (*reflect*) how media creation strategies can help improve their media viewing/listening/producing

Research Connections

In our initial research, we hoped to find resources that showed techniques and examples of how people are using interactive whiteboards to access higher levels of thought. We also hoped to find data proving its value as a learning tool. Our objective was not to create resources, but simply to retrieve valuable resources and discover the best ways to use them. (The EBSCO site is a great way to sort through publications.)

Quashie, Valerie. (May 2009). *How Interactive Is The Whiteboard?* Mathematics Teaching. p214.

Quashie sets about to prove the claims that the IWB improves interactivity, motivates students, supports learning in mathematics, and helps classroom management. She finds that students are initially captivated by the technology of the whiteboard which supports both motivation and classroom management. However, she notes that the frequent glitches that can typically occur with this technology disrupt the flow of lessons which, in turn, can have detrimental effects on learning.

Mounce, Amy B. *Teaching Content with Interactive Whiteboards*. JSET. Vol.23. No.1. p54.

The advantages to using IWB are the *"ability to write on touch-sensitive surfaces, save documents, and simultaneously display multiple documents"* p54. Again, there is nothing in this research that specifically relates to higher level thinking, only to the IWB's strengths as a demonstration tool.

Jackson, Gaudet, and McDaniel, Brammer. (November 2009). *Curriculum Integration: The Use Of Technology To Support Learning*. Journal of College Teaching & Learning. p71.

This article gives an overview of Bloom's Taxonomy and the theory of Multiple Intelligences. The authors posit that once you understand the make-up of your class, you should proceed with a Problems-based Learning model that will promote "thinking and learning" p75. There are no suggestions as to how this is facilitated by the IWB, only reinforcement that it is a good teaching tool.

Reedy, Gabriel. (July 2008). *PowerPoint, interactive whiteboards, and the visual culture of technology in schools*. Technology, Pedagogy, and Education. p143.

This article explains that the IWB is another addition to our already very visual classrooms. The authors find the IWB is useful to check understanding as a lesson unfolds. They describe a high school geography lesson that effectively uses the IWB. This may have easily been done using a blackboard; however the novelty factor added to the students' experience. The weakness is in using the IWB a format for sharing PowerPoint presentations.

Byrd, Denise. (January/February 2005). *Sixteen Whiteboards Capture Student' Attention*. Media & Methods.

This article gives a synopsis of traditional teaching activities this staff use on the IWBs, which were purchased with a grant, and how the novelty factor pays off.

Wood, Roth and Ashfield, Jean. (2008). *The use of the interactive whiteboard for creative teaching and learning in literacy and mathematics: a case study*. Vol.39. No.1. p84.

In math, "*it is the quality of the whole class teaching which determines its success*" p86. The advantages of the IWB are that it engages pupils and makes lessons faster. The authors note that sadly, because of the need to perform on standardized tests, more focus is on skills and knowledge rather than on original thinking and action. The article states that the IWB *"may provide teachers with opportunities to teach creatively"* p88, again with no suggestions as to how. As well, the authors note that *"(it) may encourage and support pupils to develop modes of creativity"* p88. They assert that teachers should include higher order thinking skills when designing IWB lessons, but offer no suggestions or examples. The advantages listed are: multi-sensory nature, ease of replay, retrieval of data, entertainment value, and availability of resources.

Scwartz, Mette, and Thormann, Joan. (February 2010). *Science On The Big Screen*. Learning & Leading with Technology. p32.

The focus of this article is on using the IWB to support inquiry-based teaching with open-ended questions. The authors site the benefits for visual learners and add that kinaesthetic learners can also benefit by drawing on the IWB. They add that the *"novelty of the technology itself"* p33 is a factor. Disappointingly, they do not address any specific use for inquiries.

After reading the research, we decided to use the IWB for its strengths. We had changed our focus from finding resources for the IWB that would facilitate higher level thinking during instruction to using it for differentiating product. We re-invigorated our research with the new focus, specifically, of using technology to enhance our Poetry Slam work

We wanted to use the IWB to allow the students to differentiate their product and to also provide opportunities that would demand higher levels of thought from Bloom's. We were also interested in the "new" thinking about Bloom's and the changes to the order of the higher levels of thought which puts creating at the top.

Consequently, we used the IWB as an option for our students when creating and presenting their products for our Poetry Slam and in their math lessons. Otherwise, we continued to use the IWB as a teaching tool.

Swados, Elizabeth. (May/June). *Instructor*. Vol.111. No.8. p41.

This article explores how writers benefit from an audience. Swados notes, *"Writers perform their work for the enjoyment of the audience."* p41.

Makhijani, Pooja. (April/May 2005). *Performance Poetry Lives On*. Writing. Vol.27. Iss.6.

This article gives a historical overview of performance poetry and reaffirms its value for students.

Marzano, Robert, Pickering, Pollock. (2001). *Classroom Instruction that Works*. ASCD.

This book explores nine learning strategies that help students improve. We used the chapter on non-linguistic representation. *"It has been shown that explicitly engaging students in the creation of non-linguistic representations stimulates and increases activity in the brain"* p73. The authors find an improvement of 19% to 40% when non-linguistic representation is used. They also state that this is the most underused instructional strategy.

Marzano, Robert, Norford, Paynter, and Pickering, Gaddy. (2001). *A Handbook for Classroom Instruction That Works.* Pearson, Merrill, Prentice, Hall.

This is a practical guide of how to apply the research from the previous book. The rubric on p155 helped guide our instruction.

Michael Pohl's Website about Bloom's Taxonomy http://www.nwlink.com/~donclark/hrd/bloom.html.

This excellent site gives a clear overview of a new way to think about Bloom's taxonomy. It supports our belief that using the Poetry Slam as a platform for student creations demands the higher level of critical thinking we desired. *"… the order of synthesis (create) and evaluation (evaluate) have been interchanged. This is in deference to the popularly held notion that if one considers the taxonomy as a hierarchy reflecting increasing complexity, then creative thinking (i.e. creating level of the revised taxonomy) is a more complex form of thinking than critical thinking (i.e. evaluating level of the new taxonomy)."* This confirms our position that whether the student creation is a personal performance or uses technology, it necessitates using the level of thought desired.

Gioia, Dana. (Spring 2003). *Disappearing Ink: Poetry at the End of Print Culture*. Hudson Review. Vol.56. Iss.1. pp21-49, p29.

This essay analyses the shifts in culture and technology and explores how poetry is experiencing a revival as a result.

Strehovec, Janez. (September 2004). *The software word: digital poetry as new media-based language art*. Digital Creativity. Vol.15. Iss.3. pp143-158.

This article describes sophisticated uses of net art, software art, browser art, and text-based electronic installations as poetry and poetry performance. Our project reflects the same ideas but on a much less tech savvy level. *"Digital poetry really is about the event, it is about making the text with a stressed temporal feature, based on two levels – on the internal 'unwrapping' of hidden textual layers as well as on the reader/user's reading in the form of interactive intervention into the texts."* p149.

Portela, Manuel. (August 2006). *Concrete and Digital Poetics*. Leonardo Electronic Almanac. Vol.14. Iss.5/6. pp1-11.

This article deals with how poets are using technology as part of their work, especially for concrete poetry. Portela explains how the theory of media intersects intrinsically with the theory of poetry writing. "This is the kind of metalinguistic analysis that signals *concrete* self-reference to the poem's information code."

Sanford, Kathy. (December 2005/January 2006). *Gendered literacy experiences: The effects of expectation and opportunity for boys' and girls' lea*rning. Journal of Adolescent & Adult Literacy. Vol.49. Iss.4. pp302-315, p14.

This article relates the findings of a Canadian study of middle school students and examines how the many supports have been put in place for boys potentially at the expense of girls. The author reinforces our finding that boys perform much better when technology is an option. *"Educational theorists and educators express concern for boys' lack of success using traditional literacies but fail to recognize their competence and skill in navigating alternative digital literacies"* p305. Sanford found that of grade 7 boys, 21% like reading and 7% like writing as opposed to 66% and 40% respectively of girls. By contrast, 78% of boys like computer activities (games, etc.), and 53% of girls (p310). Therefore, adding the technology option certainly helped ensure a high rate of enthusiastic participation in the final Poetry Slam.

Research helped us to find a better direction that would strengthen our teaching practice and, along the way, improve our knowledge. It helped us acquire greater understanding and explain many of our results.

Related Applications

We predicted that multiple intelligences (visual, auditory, kinaesthetic) would govern student selection of presentation delivery styles. We were surprised, however, to observe that "gender intelligence" played a part as well, notably in the choice of computer-aided presentations. In the grade 8 class, 41% of boys and 5% of girls chose an entirely technology-based performance for the Poetry Slam. This may spark further inquiry into gendered specific learning styles or preferences.

Volman, Monique. (May 1997). *Gender-related effects of computer and information literacy education.* Journal of Curriculum Studies. Vol.29. Iss.3. pp315-328, p14.

This article relays the findings of a study on gender-based differences and computers. The focus group is compromised of middle school students, which is our target audience as well. It affirms our own discovery that, *"Boys more often than girls use an expert repertoire … more enthusiasm, imagination: boasted more about computers and technological developments …"* p322.

Impact on Teaching Practice

During the completion of this project, it was our commitment to the collaborative process, rather than our interest in the advantages of technology, that had the most significant impact on our teaching. We are keen to include Collaborative Coaching techniques in our daily practice. At a school meeting, our principal introduced the Inclusive Schools Policy to encourage new teaching techniques and initiatives to build bridges between the school and the community.

We volunteered to demonstrate the *Critical Friends* technique at a staff meeting to acknowledge the ideas, opinions, knowledge, insights, and experiences of our staff, students,

and community. When challenges arise, it is valuable to know that thoughtful input is available for consideration. This is a recipe for a cohesive and inclusive school.

The techniques of Committed Listening and Art of Acknowledgement may be used without other people being aware of the process yet they are still extremely effective. When colleagues have wanted to speak about a topic, we've nodded and listened silently, we have asked if they have more to add, we have paraphrased their own statements as a means to help them clarify their thinking. In return, colleagues have expressed thanks for listening, said they "feel better" or "needed that", and in some cases were able to find solutions to issues without any problem-solving input from the listener.

Similarly, we have acknowledged the qualities and successes of others more regularly. For example, we have said, *"I want to acknowledge your innovative discipline strategy … your perseverance in solving a recurring problem … your spectacular project design for your students."* This elicited immense appreciation and delight. The simple joy that can result from a few sentences of acknowledgement is astounding. Since acknowledgement is not a compliment, but rather a specific and genuine statement of valuing an accomplishment, it is far more useful as a communication tool between colleagues.

Improved Teacher Knowledge

We improved our knowledge about several topics. We learned where the IWB can be maximized and its limitations. We had hoped there would be another level of application for that tool, but discovered that we are using it the way it is intended to be used, and the way in which it is deemed most valuable. We have become more familiar with Learn360 and Smart Notebook.

We learned that there has been much reflection on Bloom's Taxonomy. Among the many thought-provoking ideas is that "creating" is considered higher level thinking than "evaluating". We discussed and used Michael Pohl's work on his website that states, *"The major categories were ordered in terms of increased complexity. As a result, the order of synthesis (create) and evaluation (evaluate) have been interchanged. This is in deference to the popularly held notion that if one considers the taxonomy as a hierarchy reflecting increasing complexity, then creative thinking (i.e., creating level of the revised taxonomy) is a more complex form of thinking than critical thinking (i.e., evaluating level of the new taxonomy). Put quite simply, one can be critical without being creative (i.e., judge an idea and justify choices) but creative production often requires critical thinking (i.e., accepting and rejecting ideas on the path to creating a new idea, product or way of looking at things)."* (Pohl, 2010.)

We were mindful of this insight when our students created their presentations for our Poetry Slam. We were extremely pleased with the high level of thought revealed. (We also used this insight as a guide in the next step of the unit which was an interpretation, analysis, and evaluation of another student's work.) We learned about the history, traditions, and current practices of Poetry Slams. Poetry Slams are where, *"Writers perform their work for the enjoyment of the audience."* (Swados, p41.) We explored the variety of forms Poetry Slams

can take to find an appropriate model for ours. There is a long history of poetry as spoken word and as a performance art rather than in the written form. For example, *"In ancient Greece, traveling bards nurtured a strong oral poetic tradition as they performed to audiences across their land, reciting the lines of epic poems."* (Makhijani, 2005.)

We learned that non-linguistic representation uses dual-decoding, and improves student knowledge. This is probably the most *"underused instruction strategy"* (Marzano, 2001). *"(It) stimulates and increases activity in the brain"* (Marzano, 2001). We saw its power in our students' work as they effectively conveyed ideas using media without text.

Finally, we gained new insight into gender-based learning. We had known of many theories and facts, some of which we were already using to guide our practice, however, the high percentage of boys who chose to use technology to participate in the Slam gave us pause for thought. It alerted us to *"(boys') competence and skill in navigating alternative digital literacies."* (Sanford, 2005.)

Impact on Student Learning

Student products were better than anticipated. Not only did students utilize a remarkable variety of strategies, but they approached the task with rewarding enthusiasm and consideration. The professional results that can be achieved through the mastery of audio/visual functions of various computer programs led to new standards for quality in student work. Students willingly dedicated time before, and after, school to perfect their creations – seeking to make a high-impact delivery of lettering, music, or images to convey meaning.

The computer-based presentations allowed introverted students to comfortably communicate their knowledge as they could prepare work in advance, and did not have to offer a live reading or explanation. Students with written output difficulties, or disabilities, were also comfortable as they could demonstrate a high level of thought at a symbolic level, without the constraints of words.

By promoting the use of technology and by affording students the time to explore various computer programs and websites, students were also able to link their proficiencies to cross-curricular endeavours. Their time building lessons in Smart Notebook, for example, built their confidence with that software so they could use it successfully in other subject areas, (i.e., building a mock webpage for a conservation organization in science).

Finally, on a Collaborative Coaching note, students were involved in Committed Listening throughout the project. This became an excellent means to promote attentive, deliberate, and equitable participation in discussion and reflections.

Shows Evidence of Innovation

Innovation was not the objective of this project, and we remain satisfied with the results.

Connecting Curriculum to Culture

By Hollie Mahusky and Jasmine Nix

Purpose of Project

To have our Aboriginal students connect to the curriculum in a meaningful way that would keep them engaged and more eager to participate.

Project Description

Our project was to use our Collaborative Coaching release time to learn more about Ojibway values, beliefs, and traditions. Our goal was to incorporate these into our teaching and be able to plan real world tasks to promote learning in all subject areas. We wished to use this experience to learn how to teach students based on their individual needs.

We had the opportunity to plan lessons and units around concepts that are personal to our students and connect to their own lives. In this way, we hoped to engage the students more effectively.

Our project also entailed weekly Collaborative Coaching sessions between ourselves. These sessions included discussions about how the students were responding to the prepared lessons and our thoughts about our own progress. These sessions allowed us to collaborate and make our lessons and activities richer by sharing our reflections and ideas.

Curriculum Connections

Art

Aboriginal Animals

Students wrote acrostic poems about an animal they would find in their region that was symbolic of the Aboriginal culture, and typed them on the computer. They were asked to find a picture of an animal in the form of Aboriginal artwork, and use it in the background of their poem. After the artwork was printed, they were able to colour it, paste it onto construction paper, and laminate it.

Expectations

- Grade 5: use a variety of materials, tools, and techniques to determine solutions to design challenges
- Grade 5: demonstrate an awareness of ways in which visual arts reflect the beliefs and traditions of a variety of peoples and of people in different times and places
- Grade 6: use elements of design in art works to communicate ideas, messages, and understandings

- Grade 6: identify and describe some of the ways in which art forms and styles reflect the beliefs and traditions of a variety of communities, times, and places

Watercolour Painting for Nature Poems

Students wrote a variety of poems outdoors, and used the inspiration of the outdoors to paint the paper on which they would print their poems. After the students had printed off their poems onto the painted paper, they completed a poetry booklet.

Expectations

- Grade 7: use a variety of materials, tools, and techniques to determine solutions to design challenges
- Grade 8: use a variety of materials, tools, and techniques to determine solutions to design challenges

Interpreting Aboriginal Artwork

Students critiqued, analyzed, and interpreted the work of local Aboriginal artists. They were asked a variety of questions related to their interpretation of the artwork. It was explained to the students that there is no right or wrong answer. It was extraordinary to see how much the students opened up after knowing that they did not have to give a "right" answer in order to be correct. Students also learned the different styles used in the artwork, and mimicked the styles to create their own artwork.

Expectations

- Grade 7: demonstrate an understanding of how to read and interpret signs, symbols, and style in art works
- Grade 7: use a variety of materials, tools, techniques, and technologies to determine solutions to increasingly complex design challenges
- Grade 8: interpret a variety of art works and identify the feelings, issues, themes, and social concerns that they convey
- Grade 8: use a variety of materials, tools, techniques, and technologies to determine solutions to increasingly complex design challenges

Language

Oral Language

Choral Reading

Several poems with Aboriginal content were selected by the teacher. Students were paired based on reading ability, and asked to practice reading the poem chorally (at the same time). After two short periods of practicing, students presented their poems in front of the class, using the techniques that were taught, such as clarity, volume, pace, etc.

Expectations

- Grade 5: identify a range of presentation strategies used in oral texts and analyse their effect on the audience
- Grade 5: communicate orally in a clear, coherent manner, presenting ideas, opinions, and information in a readily understandable form
- Grade 5: identify some vocal effects, including tone, pace, pitch, volume, and a variety of sound effects, and use them appropriately and with sensitivity towards cultural differences to help communicate their meaning
- Grade 6: identify a variety of presentation strategies used in oral texts and analyze their effect on the audience
- Grade 6: communicate orally in a clear, coherent manner, using appropriate organizing strategies and formats to link and sequence ideas and information
- Grade 6: identify a range of vocal effects, including tone, pace, pitch, volume, and a variety of sound effects, and use them appropriately and with sensitivity towards cultural differences to help communicate their meaning
- Grade 7: read a wide variety of increasingly complex or difficult texts from diverse cultures, including literary texts
- Grade 7: identify a range of vocal effects, including tone, pace, pitch, volume, and a variety of sound effects, and use them appropriately and with sensitivity towards cultural differences to communicate their meaning
- Grade 8: read a wide variety of increasingly complex or difficult texts from diverse cultures, including literary texts
- Grade 8: identify a range of vocal effects, including tone, pace, pitch, volume, and a variety of sound effects, and use them appropriately and with sensitivity towards cultural differences to communicate their meaning

Physical Education

Stick Catch

In this game of quick reflexes, students used sticks to challenge their mind/hand coordination. In the first period, the class went on a walk to gather sticks about the size of a pencil. It was made into a friendly competition to see who could gather the most. All appropriate size sticks were placed into a basket to be used for the game.

Students were instructed to place one stick on top of their hand (palm side down) and hold their hand outstretched. The object is to drop the hand and bring it around to catch the stick before it falls. You do not throw the stick in the air, but rather pull your hand away. If this is completed successfully, the student moves to two sticks, three sticks, and so on until they

cannot do anymore. I read that the record for this game was 26 sticks for a student. One of our students was able to get to 14 sticks. The students loved this game!

Ring on a String

This game requires the teacher to put a ring of some sort onto a string and tie the string together at the ends to make a circle. Students stand around the circle and each hold the string with both hands. One person is selected to stand in the middle. Their job is to guess who has the ring in their hand. When they say "Go", students around the circle pass the ring around the circle as subtly as possible. When they say "Stop", the students stop passing the ring and the person has to guess whose hand it is in.

The students did not enjoy this game, finding it boring. We would recommend it for younger students.

Expectations

- Grade 5: catch, while moving, objects of various sizes and shapes (e.g., balls, Frisbees) using one or two hands
- Grade 5: use a piece of equipment to send and receive an object to a partner or a target

Research Connections

Learning Through the Icons. Canadian heritage and citizenship published by L & M Illustrations INC (1999)

Keepers of the Earth. Native American stories and environmental activities for children by: Michael J. Caduto and Joseph Bruchac (1997)

Indian and Northern Affairs Canada (INAC) http://www.ainc-inac.gc.ca/index-eng.asp. L*earning Circle* (INAC activities for children)

Elementary Teachers' Federation of Ontario (ETFO) http://www.etfo.ca

http://www.dltk-kids.com/world/native/index.htm (great activities)

http://www.shannonthunderbird.com/creation_stories.htm (creation stories)

http://www.ilhawaii.net/~stony/poems1.html#calling (Aboriginal poetry)

http://www.mathcentral.uregina.ca/RR/database/RR.09.00/treptau1/mathcontent.html (Aboriginal mathematics)

Turtle Island poster and activities

Related Applications

It is important to acknowledge a student's background and link content to individual interests to engage the student and promote his or her success in the classroom. We focused on the Aboriginal culture because of our students' heritage. However, if we lived in a different community, or taught in another school, we may need to teach through other cultures.

It is our belief that it is important to teach all students about different cultures. Aboriginal culture plays a large part in Canada's heritage and so students of all ages and ethnicities should learn about First Nations beliefs, customs, and background.

It was important for us to begin by incorporating Aboriginal culture into our lesson plans because our students were disengaged with the content that we were teaching and we needed to trigger their interest. Now that they have begun to show a higher level of engagement, we feel ready to branch out and incorporate other cultures into our programs.

The Collaborative Coaching framework and related skills proved excellent for helping with teaching practice, but the learning can also be transferred to other areas of life. These communication skills are useful in every type of partnership, including marriages and friendships. The project allowed us to recognize the value of listening carefully to one another, and the importance of bouncing ideas off each other and communicating effectively for better problem-solving.

Impact on Teaching Practice

Prior to this project, we had made no adaptations to the curriculum to meet the interests of our students. When we began this project, we believed that to be successful we would need to teach whole units about the Aboriginal culture.

However, as the project evolved, we became more creative in our planning. We realized that we did not have to plan entire units about Aboriginal culture but could instead incorporate elements of the culture into the curriculum for increased student engagement. Indeed, it was of greater benefit, both to the students and to the teacher, to integrate small cultural components into lessons rather than teach the culture in large chunks.

It inspired both of us to observe the increased level of the children's excitement and interest.

Improved Teacher Knowledge

Following this project we know first-hand the importance of designing activities that are relatable to students. It is in fostering connections that we can create a classroom of students who are genuinely engaged with the topics under discussion. The well-known saying, "Seeing is believing" reflects how our teaching practice evolved. We always knew that we needed to plan activities that connect to our students' lives, but once we saw the impact, we understood the true importance of doing so.

The process of planning cross-curricular activities proved easier than anticipated. We were able to incorporate portions of the Aboriginal culture into numerous areas of the curriculum, thus creating multiple connections and allowing the students to make connections on their own.

Since Aboriginal culture is so extensive and customs differ between reserves, we found it best to seek applicable information from locals. We also conducted our own research to further our knowledge of the Ojibwe culture, and as a result, have developed a deeper and clearer understanding of its customs and beliefs. We are continually improving our knowledge and implementing new learning into our teaching practice.

Impact on Student Learning

Prior to this project students lacked interest in activities because they had a difficult time relating to the content. The lack of student engagement prompted additional behavioural problems during lessons and activities. Students had trouble paying attention, and needed more clarification after lessons.

During the project, students were more engaged and excited about the activities with an Aboriginal focus. Students became more confident in their knowledge about certain topics and contributed to classroom discussion. On several instances, the students took on the role of teacher. Students asked good questions during discussions, and stayed on task longer without getting distracted. The majority of students had a higher rate of completed work, and they were proud of their accomplishments.

Shows Evidence of Innovation

This project has changed our teaching practice and the way our students engage in lessons that are focused on Aboriginal content. Nonetheless, it did not change the daily dynamic of our classroom. Some behavioural problems continued, and some students remained disengaged with our lessons. On the upside, we observed positive changes during particular lessons we planned around Aboriginal content. With this project, we laid the groundwork to plan higher order and complex activities.

Supporting Intermediate Teachers in Implementing Guided Reading

By Janice Staats and Laura DeGrow

Purpose of Project

Organizing for Intermediate Guided Reading

Project Description

To find a way to help teachers organize literacy instruction to facilitate regular guided reading groups.

Research Connections

***The Daily 5* by Gail Boushey and Joan Moser**

The authors have designed a classroom practice they call The Daily 5 which includes a variety of literacy tasks that students complete daily while the teacher meets with small groups or confers with individuals. The authors suggest managing the entire literacy block and providing students with substantial time to read and write to foster literacy independence.

Boushey and Moser explore ways to build student stamina to allow extended periods of literacy activities. As well, the authors investigate the behaviours that culminate in engaged learners and how to teach students to understand their literacy goals.

***Practice with Purpose* by Debbie Diller**

The author explores how teachers of grades 3 to 6 can set up their classrooms so that all students can be successful doing meaningful independent work using literacy work stations. As well, the author offers guidance on establishing routines for independent reading and response writing.

***A Difficult Choice: Which Model of Reading Instruction for My Students?* by Roberta Linder (2009)**

The author posits that learning is maximized when students are the individuals primarily responsible for their learning. In using literacy workstations, the students are responsible for being the directors of their own learning.

The goal of guided reading is that students will be able to read increasingly difficult texts independently. During guided reading, the author suggests that a teacher work with a small group of students to support their current needs as readers. It is important to constantly analyze and evaluate the effectiveness of reading instruction in order to create the biggest impact for our students. On choosing a literacy instruction model, *"… each educator has to*

find his own point of entry into the framework ... each element is worth studying, trying with children, and reflecting on the results. Depth of understanding is more important than perfect implementation." (Fountas and Pinnell, 1996.)

Related Applications

Cross curricular: integrated curriculum units.

The Setting

A middle school in a higher-income suburb of Hamilton. The surroundings are beautiful and the students are generally well behaved. Staff rarely leave, are a tight knit group with many personal friendships that extend beyond the school. From a staff culture point of view, it is what is called a 'closed community', where teaching practices are slow to change and new ideas tend to be limited or simply minor variations on older methods. Many of the teachers have never taught primary or junior grades, so they have not had the PD opportunities that teachers in Grades K-6 have had. Students often appear disengaged, but behavior issues are minor. Despite repeated emphasis on comprehensive literacy practices over the past few years, guided reading was not being implemented. Both the researchers for this project work in support roles in the school.

The Epiphany

Co-researcher Janice Staats participated in an impromptu meeting with an occasional teacher, who had newly arrived at the school as an LTO for one of the grade 7 English teachers. During this conversation, the teacher shared her view that the whole class lessons were not effective. She discussed her experiences at other schools working with intermediate students in English programs that involved literacy centres. The teacher noted these literacy centres facilitated instruction, and increased student engagement. A grade 7 teacher, in hearing the description of the organization of literary centres, wondered if it would improve classroom organization. In response, it was decided that we would arrange to visit another school that was using literacy centres.

The Visit

With two grade 7 teachers, we visited a school that was actively using The Daily 5 and literacy centres in their classroom planning. We had the opportunity to visit both a grade 6 and grade 7 class. Students were on task, and working productively with one another. Teachers were not interrupted by students at their guided reading centres. We took careful note of the logistical requirements for setting up the classroom. Following the observation sessions, we returned to the school to meet in the afternoon. We addressed the tasks necessary to be ready to implement the plan in a timely manner in grade 7 classrooms. We divided responsibilities shortly before the March break, and planned to meet again with the assigned jobs completed.

The Planning

Upon returning from the March break, meetings were held to talk about resources and structure. This project's researchers worked out a detailed plan of how the first week launch of the literacy centres should unfold in the grade 7 classrooms. Confusing material was clarified, and alternatives were presented. There was an identified need for modeled and shared lessons. We worked out a structure for the first week, gathered materials, and prepared most of the resources for the first round of literacy centres.

The Implementation

The researchers met with the two grade 7 teachers to talk about structure, organization and resources for the first week. The materials and resources were supplied to the classroom. The teachers needed to organize the process in their own minds before they could move forward. However, in time, the teachers introduced the literacy centres, and students seemed to be engaged and working well in the new structure. Guided reading was taking place.

The Roadblocks

The process stopped. A long history of preoccupation with covering all expectations in the curriculum, combined with constant interruptions for extracurricular activities, got in the way. While Laura DeGrow, primarily, continues to support the teachers with materials, and in class whenever possible, the instructional strategy of literacy centres is not continuing.

Challenges to the process include issues of classroom management, and using practices, such as The Daily 5 methods, without an in-depth understanding of their philosophy. Typically, students were being kept away from the guided reading table, but the concept of how and why literary centres are useful was not explored in a meaningful way to inform practice.

Due to the need to respect professional boundaries, it is difficult to fully explore the decisions of colleagues about their instructional choices. Both researchers confirm that there would be more coaching conversations if they were actually doing implementation in their own classrooms.

Impact on Teaching Practice

As a Classroom Teacher

While the literacy stations were operating in the classroom, guided reading was occurring regularly. The organization of literacy centres did provide the structure required to allow the teacher time to work uninterrupted with small groups of students. It also provided the structure for the comprehensive literacy and formative assessment that we sought.

The literacy stations provided a solution for dealing with the lack of time for guided reading and independent practice which are essential to optimize student learning.

Improved Teacher Knowledge

As classroom teachers, we gained greater understanding of literacy centres. Insights include the following:

- Students need choice and variety to become more fully engaged in the learning process.
- Activities at learning stations need to be authentic and purposeful for commitment to task.
- Literacy centres allow for group tasks which dovetail with the social needs of intermediate students. These students want to be independent from the teacher, and enjoy working together and learning from each other.
- Not all practice needs to be marked, but all practice should be used for formative feedback.

In Our Support Role

When we understand that teachers implement new ideas and practices in their own ways, and in their own time frames, we are less likely to jump to the conclusion that whatever we are trying to achieve is not working.

In understanding how people learn and integrate new ideas, those in support roles may hold more meaningful, helpful conversations with them.

The Big 'AHA'

The gradual release of responsibility that we wish for students is similarly desirable for teachers when they are attempting to learn something new. After the modeling, there needs to be a shared element where the adult learner has input into the process, as well as support. Coaching means providing opportunities for practice and dialogue.

When you attempt to do the work for the adult learner, you do not experience a collaborative conversation but are simply having a one-sided conversation. This, in effects, stops the learning process.

Impact on Student Learning

As a Classroom Teacher

The benefits of literacy stations for students are increased time for practice and feedback when learning new skills. They also promote increased engagement as students develop a sense of ownership by having more choice in their learning activities.

Students also had the opportunity to work with peers collaboratively which extended their own learning and group work skills.

Shows Evidence of Innovation

As a Classroom Teacher

It proved possible to adapt a practice designed for primary and junior classrooms to an intermediate classroom.

In a Support Role

- A teacher must take ownership and have motivation for change to take place. Change in classroom practice is not sustainable if it is only pursued because *"it seems like a good idea".*
- Change is not something that can be imposed, but needs to be a collaborative process that engages the teacher.
- It is important to build in a gradual, flexible, release of support, agreed upon by both the classroom teacher and support person.
- It is useful to remember that the learning needs of teachers are as diverse as our students. Everyone embraces a new concept in different ways and at different times. Where possible, provide a collaborative structure to problem-solve.

The SEA of Teachers (Teachers and Assistive Technology)

By Leslie Hunter-Dover and Kim Ryckman

Purpose of Project

To work in a partnership sharing, coaching, and teaching best practices to maximize the use of technology and resources between the classroom teacher and the special education resource teacher.

Project Description

We worked together, and with some grade 7 students, on how to best integrate their SEA equipment, mainly Kurzweil and Dragon, to optimize student performance.

Kim Ryckman teaches at Stephen Central Public School, in Crediton, in the Avon Maitland District School Board. For the past two years, she has been teaching a grade 7 class and a grade 6/7 class. Both classes contained many high needs students who required technological accommodation.

Leslie Hunter-Duvar is a Special Education Resource Teacher with the Grand Erie District School Board.

Following Collaborative Coaching conversations, Leslie asked Kim two coaching questions with the intent to simply listen: *"What frustrates you?"* and *"What can we do to resolve the frustration?"* These two queries, asked without judgment or preconceived ideas, resulted in the recognition that training children on assistive technology was a long, arduous process that taxed both the student and the teacher.

From these discussions, Leslie and Kim determined a valuable focus for their project would be to find a way to make training user-friendly and time efficient for the children and the classroom teacher. In particular, the teachers sought to create a simple way to train students on Dragon, a popular voice-recognition program that is used with Kurzwell.

Background

Traditionally, it took an average of two hours to train each student on Dragon. The student must read a long list of words into the computer. However, students who need voice-recognition software typically have enormous difficulty reading so the teacher must sit with the student during the process. However, the computer microphone often picks up the teacher's voice when she offers a prompt. When that happens, the process has to be started all over again. Meanwhile, the student becomes increasingly frustrated, bored and restless.

In an effort to find a solution, Leslie observed Kim during a training session. Working collaboratively, the teachers exchanged perspectives on student and teacher needs, and brainstormed possible solutions. It became apparent that the issues of time and tedium were not the only ones that needed to be addressed. It was important that students have the ability to set up the voice-recognition program independently for the sake of their confidence and self-esteem.

The Solution

Kim and Leslie created an audio version of the list words that students need to input for the voice recognition program. Students listen to a word and then repeat it into the computer. The result has proved to be, in a word, amazing. With the audio version, the time it takes to input the words has dropped from two hours to 20 minutes. Moreover, students can work on their own, which frees up the teacher and significantly decreases student frustration and independence.

To perfect the audio recording, Kim and Leslie carefully observed and timed several students to determine the ideal length of the pause between words, during which student repeats the word into the computer. If the pause is too short, the students would find the process frustrating and distressing, if it is too long the process becomes boring and difficult to complete.

It was extremely rewarding to observe the students work with the audio files so successfully. As a result of this project, students were readily using Dragon with success and confidence.

As well as checklist was created for the students and teachers to know where the students are in terms of their training needs, and where further training is necessary.

To have access to the files, please see the attachments below or visit the wiki.

Curriculum Connections

All expectations literacy related and special education and the learning for all document.

Research Connections

Dunnick, Belinda and Lasky, Beth. (Summer 2009). *Spotlight on Special Education.* JSD. Vol.30. No.3. NSDC.

Goldius, Carol and Gotesman, Edith. *The Impact of Assistive Technologies on the Reading Outcomes of College Students with Dyslexia*. EBSCO.

Resistance is Futile by Marlene Mcintosh https://www.cacuss.ca/content/documents/Link/CADSPPE_Resources/ResistenceIsFutile.pdf.

Related Applications

How to train students on dragon http://ict-greenbrier.wikispaces.com/file/view/Training%20%26%20Using%20Dragon%20Naturally%20Speaking.pdf

Kurzweil Skills Checklist http://ict-greenbrier.wikispaces.com/file/view/kurzweil%20checklist.pdf

Universal Design for Learning

Related technology applications for classroom teachers, resource teachers, and students (see wiki http://ict-greenbrier.wikispaces.com/)

Impact on Teaching Practice

It was thanks to the Collaborative Coaching process and release time that we could work together to create a solution to improve classroom practice. Visiting each other's schools and holding coaching conversations proved invaluable.

As professionals in our roles, we gained greater confidence in working as a team to share best practices, and expertise, with our colleagues. In speaking with colleagues, we developed the skill of listening first to identify concerns and asking further questions, rather than imposing preset notions. In this way, teachers feel heard and can take greater ownership of solutions. We also are much more sensitive to the needs of students as they learn technology.

Improved Teacher Knowledge

We gained greater understanding of Kurzweil and Dragon and the impact of technology on student learning.

Impact on Student Learning

Students gained confidence in using their technology to enhance their learning. By working effectively with this technology, students were able to strengthen their literacy skills and move up levels of learning.

Shows Evidence of Innovation

Wiki http://ict-greenbrier.wikispaces.com

Glogster Poster http://ryckgang.edu.glogster.com/lost-at-sea

Blending English Literacy Initiatives into the French Language Program

By Kelly Barbarich and Anita Simpson

Purpose of Project

Could incorporating the objectives and expectations of the school's literacy program into the French program promote higher student engagement and achievement in French and improve learning in both literacy and French?

Project Description

Anita is a Special Education Resource Teacher. At the time of this project, she was working at Mount Albert Public School, servicing approximately 40 special needs students in grades 6 through 8. Kelly is the intermediate French teacher at the same school, in the York Region District School Board.

The goal of both teachers was to incorporate the school's literacy program into its French program. While the school recognized the French Language program, there were few efforts to include it in the English language literacy initiatives that were being promoted in other subject areas.

As teachers, both Anita and Kelly believed that the French program and English literacy program could complement each other if there was greater collaboration and focus on the common literacy goals and expectations.

Through Collaborative Coaching conversations, it became evident that a source of frustration for French teachers was the lack of collaborative effort and resources to participate in a whole-school literacy approach.

The Solution

The teachers wished to find a way to support the needs of the French teacher and the literacy objectives of the school, while improving student engagement in French classes. It was a daunting undertaking that the authors note could not have happened without release time to work together on brainstorming, planning, and assessment.

As a first step, the teachers identified the curriculum expectations for this research project. They decided on a French, literacy, and geography focus. Since Anita did not teach French but needed to teach geography, including this subject focus would serve both their needs and allow for co-planning a lesson unit. Together, they resolved that the summative task would be the creation of an imaginary town that included labels, and an oral presentation.

Co-planning the unit proved stimulating and beneficial. The authors credit the listening skills they learned in Collaborative Coaching for facilitating their teamwork. They were willing and prepared to listen attentively to each other's ideas. In hallways and at recess, they would ask each other how the unit was progressing; what was working with students and what were areas for improvement.

Initially, the teachers planned to mark the maps together; however, scheduling logistics prevented them from doing so. Instead, they met to review examples of how they marked and reflect on their assessments. These coaching conversations, which were free of judgments, allowed the teachers to learn from each other, offer important validation and greater perspective on their own work.

Student interest in the task was high and incorporating English literacy activities into the French program built on their prior knowledge. The blending of English and French literacy activities served to show students that French is not a stand-alone subject but fits in with other learning.

Curriculum Connections

Anita Simpson

Writing Expectations: Grade 7

- 3.1 spell familiar words correctly (e.g., words from their oral vocabulary, anchor charts, and shared-, guided-, and independent reading texts; words used regularly in instruction across the curriculum)
- 2.7 make revisions to improve the content, clarity, and interest of their written work, using a variety of strategies

Modified Expectations:

- use a variety of sentence types, structures and lengths appropriately and effectively
- use statements, exclamations, questions, complex sentences, subordinate clauses
- organize information to convey a central idea, using well-linked paragraphs - paragraphs that include a topic sentence, body, closing sentence
- proofread and correct final drafts, focusing on grammar, punctuation, spelling, and conventions of style

Kelly Barbarich

French Expectations: Fr. 7

- oral presentation of 15 to 20 sentences
- write simple and some compound sentences and questions, using familiar and new vocabulary

- write in a variety of simple forms (i.e., letters, poems, descriptions), following a model and making substitutions and minor adaptations to the model
- revise and edit personal writing, using feedback from the teacher and peers, and using resources including technology
- use and spell the vocabulary appropriate for this grade level
- use and identify demonstrative adjectives

Research Connections

- The authors found no research on integrating English literacy programs into French language programs.
- *Differentiated Instruction* by Tracy A. Huebner.
- *Differentiated instruction to the rescue!* by Inez Fugate Liftig.
- *Reflective teaching as self-directed professional development: building practical or work-related knowledge by* Mark Minott.
- *Differentiating Instruction in the Regular Classroom* by Diane Heacox.

Impact on Teaching Practice

The Collaborative Coaching workshop proved extremely powerful in prompting new insights and practice on how we communicate with our colleagues, our students, and others in the school community. Both authors would describe themselves as previously "challenged" as listeners. However, practicing active listening without preconceived opinions has made all interactions more valuable.

Whereas, in the past, we would be quick to try and solve other people's problems, we have shifted our approach to putting greater emphasis on listening and facilitating people's own discoveries of solutions that are meaningful for them. This has been effective to improve communication in the classroom and staff room.

We used the active listening process throughout the length of this project with the result that it allowed us to become more reflective about our own classroom practices. It took us off auto pilot into reflecting about our own philosophy of teaching and our own approach.

When do you pair, when do you group, how do you group … ?

Improved Teacher Knowledge

We have improved communication skills to facilitate team planning and other collaborative exchanges. We have gained greater knowledge into how to work in tandem with colleagues, mutual gain, to meet literacy program objectives.

Impact on Student Learning

Student engagement increased in French classes as evidenced by greater enthusiasm for the task and keener understanding of it. Given their familiarity with English literacy initiatives, students enjoyed a greater comfort level when those tasks were adapted for the French program.

Moreover, the project helped students recognize that French is not an isolated subject but builds on other learning.

Shows Evidence of Innovation

This project is innovative in that it seeks to extend the cross-curricular approach to English literacy into second language learning. In this way, it is breaking down traditional barriers between the English and French programs within a school.

Notes:

As educators, our professional conversations are often about making desired change happen. Collaborative Coaching can enrich these professional conversations.

Dr. Anne Rodrigue

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